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ABSTRACT

A rationale is presented for both investigating the context of educational organizations and building in a program renewal capacity as an essential operational component of every such organization. The findings of several program evaluation studies conducted at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education are reviewed. These studies were designed to collect internal and external indicators of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The results show that the faculty is providing leadership, research, and service. However, interviews with 107 of the beginning teachers revealed a great number of problems they face in their first year. Companion documents examine other aspects of the teacher evaluation program. (Author/MLF)

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RESEARCH, SERVICE, LEADERSHIP:

BUT WHAT DO I DO WITH

THE CLASS?

by

Eugene Ratsoy

PHI DELTA KAPPA

INITIATION NIGHT

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RESEARCH, SERVICE, LEADERSHIP: BUT WHAT DO I DO WITH THE CLASS?

Eugene Ratsoy

This paper is titled "Research, Service, Leadership: But What Do I Do With the Class?" to highlight a major problem we face in the field of Education. The problem is, how do we assure that our efforts in the three areas--leadership, research and service--are relevant to the all-important relationship that should exist between the teacher and the class. A second reason for the particular title is that it mentions the three goals of PDK: research, service and leadership. This seemed appropriate for our PDK initiation night. When the Phi Delta Kappa award was presented to me some months ago, I was heavily involved in program evaluation activities in the Faculty of Education. I have therefore chosen to include in the paper some of the findings of these activities--those having general implications.

It was a great privilege for me to have been associated with talented and energetic people in the design and conduct of the various studies. As with most research and development activities, few of the projects were the work of one individual. Among those who assisted in the program evaluation studies were several of my colleagues, most of whom, by no coincidence, are members of this Fraternity. Dynamic leaders and researchers seem to gravitate naturally to PDK. As I indicated at the Chapter meeting last May, I feel very much indebted to these individuals and to the many Master's and Ph.D. students and the support staff who were involved in a variety of ways in project design, data collection and analysis, and drafting the reports.

Purpose of Paper

This paper has four purposes: (1) to present a rationale which outlines the need to investigate the context of schools and other educational organizations; (2) to provide an argument concerning the necessity for having a program renewal capacity in our educational organizations; (3) to present the findings of several recent program evaluation studies--some completed and some in their "final boarding stages" at the U. of A. Faculty of Education; and (4) to identify possible implications of these studies for that institution and for educational organizations generally.

Organizational Contexts and the Need for a Program Renewal Capacity

Over the past few years I have come to assume a certain value stance concerning program evaluation. For example, I now hold firmly the belief that there is a need for each educational organization to have as an essential operational component a built-in self-renewing capacity which permits it to adapt its educational processes to changes in that organization's environment.

A program renewal cycle appropriate for schools and school systems might begin with the so-called program appraisal and review (PAR) approaches which are receiving substantial attention in current literature on program evaluation. The focus in PAR efforts is on needs assessment procedures designed to identify areas of weakness in existing programs thus facilitating and perhaps rationalizing program improvement activities. PAR is generally more comprehensive than other program evaluation activities in that it involves simultaneous monitoring of a variety of factors such as funds, personnel, student intake, quality of service and outcomes (Franklin and Thrasher, 1976:22).

In some respects the program evaluation activities at the University of Alberta Faculty of Education began with a similar premise concerning the utility of an all-inclusive program evaluation model. Program evaluators in teacher education settings face a number of challenges associated with their efforts:

1. Not the least of these is the development of choice of an appropriate evaluation model to guide their program evaluation activities. The premises, processes and often products of Scriven's goal-free model, Eisener's art criticism model, Stake's transaction model, Tyler's behavior objectives model, the accreditation model, the decision making model and the systems analysis (PPBS) model, among others, are all to some degree different. For this reason some evaluators suggest a multiple perspective is best.

2. The selection of appropriate data collection procedures is a second challenge.

3. A third concerns how to disseminate the results and convince the readers of the validity of the findings.

4. A fourth and no less important challenge is the selection of data that will be perceived as valid by the research methods personnel and by those who distrust quantitative analyses.

Problems like these notwithstanding the Program Evaluation Office undertook a number of studies which, overall, have implications not just for the Faculty but for the field of education more generally. For this occasion I have decided to confine my presentation to a particular set of these studies and their findings.

Teaching Skills and their Development

A continuing challenge facing teacher educators is that of designing preparation experiences which will improve the classroom performance of the novice teachers who are the products of their programs. Put another way, professional preparation experiences--as distinct from the liberal education or knowledge-of-discipline parts of such programs--

can be justified only if they make a positive impact on the teaching skills or behaviors of the candidates for teaching enrolled in the program.

These so-called professional component experiences fall into two major categories: (a) formal courses in pedagogy and curriculum as well as the philosophical, historical and behavioral foundations of teaching and learning; and (b) the practicum experiences, including micro-teaching, peer teaching and the in-class experiences which we associate with the label student teaching. Our problem has been (1) to identify the necessary teaching behaviors or strategies which make a difference in the classroom; (2) to separate those behaviors which can be learned or acquired in a teacher education program from those which, though necessary, must be brought by the trainee to the program (these may be intuitive, a result of maturation, or acquired before or even during the program but outside of the professional education component); and, (3) to separate those behaviors which can only be acquired in education practicum from those which are developed in formal education (theory) courses. Recognizing that the identification of the total set of "important" teaching behaviors and strategies is a very difficult task, and that there may be overlap among the three sets of strategies mentioned above and pictorially represented in Figure 1, we set out to do the following:

(1) To identify a basic set of teaching skills or strategies viewed as necessary for effective classroom instruction;

(2) To assess behavior change (if any) during student teaching in each of the skill areas identified in the first phase of the study;

(3) To assess the competence of beginning teachers in each of these areas; and

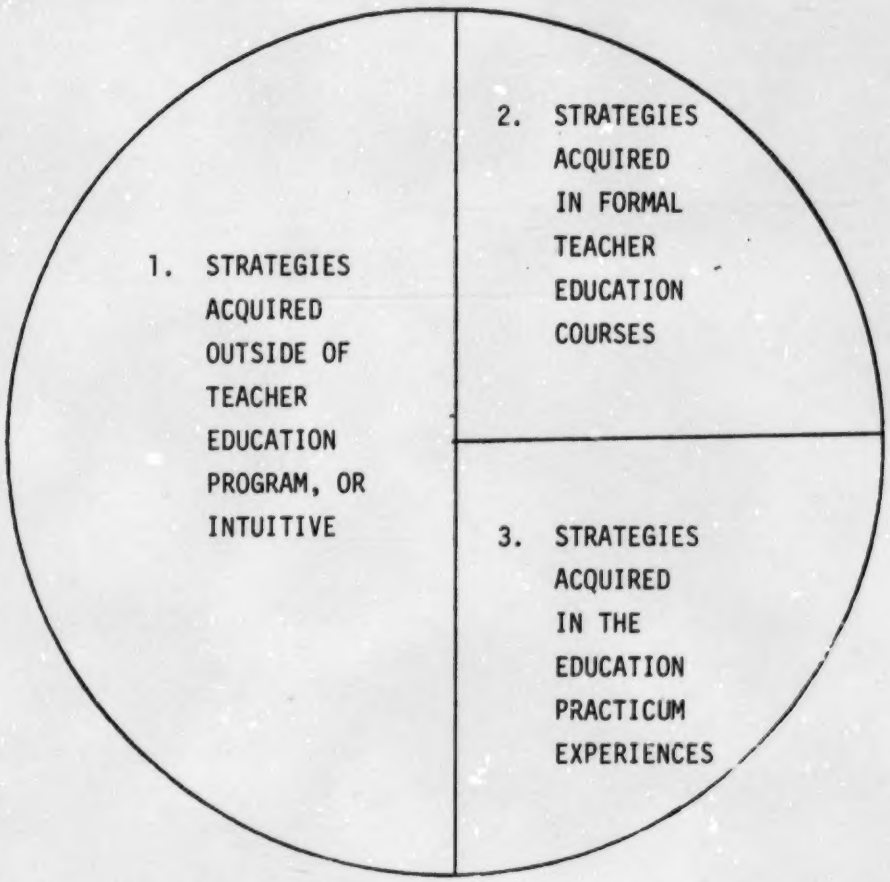
1. STRATEGIES ACQUIRED OUTSIDE OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR INTUITIVE
2. STRATEGIES ACQUIRED IN FORMAL TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES
3. STRATEGIES ACQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES

FIGURE 1

TEACHING STRATEGIES
WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO
IMPROVED PERFORMANCE
BY STUDENTS

(4) To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current teacher education program.

The findings associated with each of these phases are reported below.

Phase 1: Identification of teaching skills. The first phase of the study involved the identification of a basic set of skills "required" by teachers. Based on a search of the literature and the responses both to an open-ended items questionnaire and a forced-choice items instrument which was completed by faculty members, student teachers, a stratified random sample of beginning teachers, and the immediate supervisors of these new teachers, a list of twenty-one teaching skills was identified. These were classified into six categories as follows: (a) two managerial skills; (b) four curricular skills; (c) five methodological skills; (d) five interpersonal skills; (e) two ecological skills; and (d) three evaluative skills.[1] Respondent ratings of these skills on importance for teaching were used to construct rankings for each of the respondent groups as well as an overall ranking as shown in Table 1. Several generalizations emerged from this part of the study. Among them were:

1. The rankings of teaching skills in terms of their importance for teaching were highly consistent among education seniors, novice teachers, in-school resident supervisors and Education Faculty members at the University of Alberta. This was reassuring in view of the need for program developers in a Faculty like ours to focus their efforts on the development of a manageable, perhaps standard, set of competencies. Perhaps more significant were the reactions of many respondents who claimed that all or most of the twenty-one were important.

2. The identification of these "necessary" skills served as a basis for the study of teaching skill development. The practicum in student teaching was one focus for such an analysis.

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[1] A detailed description of this phase of the study may be found in Eugene W. Ratsoy, Nelly McEwen and Brian J. Caldwell, Skills of Beginning Teachers and Perceived Effectivenes of Preparation Programs. Program Evaluation Report No. 4. Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1979.

Table 1

Importance of Various Teaching Skills as Perceived by Four Groups of Respondents

Skills	Rankings Based on Respondent Selection of Five Most Important Skills: Supervisors N = 41	Beginning Teachers N = 107	Student Teachers[1] N = 107	Education Faculty Members[1] N = 64	Ranking of Mean of Four Ranks
Managerial					
1. Handle routines	14.5*	18	15.5	16.5*	17
2. Control students	1	1	1	6.5*	1
Curricular					
3. Specify objectives	8.5*	10	9	4.5*	9
4. Select content	18	9	11	14.5*	12
5. Organize material	7	7	6	11.5*	8
6. Plan instruction	2	5	4	1	3
Methodological					
7. Present information	5	6	5	8	5
8. Explain	14.5*	12	13.5	13	13
9. Question	14.5*	13	8	11.5*	10
10. Summarize	20*	21	19	20*	20.5*
11. Utilize media	20*	19	18	16.5*	19
Interpersonal					
12. Establish rapport with students	3	8	7	6.5*	6
13. Motivate students	4	2	2	3	2
14. Accommodate individual student differences	10.5*	4	10	4.5*	7
15. Encourage student participation	12	11	13.5	18	14
16. Work with others on staff	8.5*	17	21	20*	18
Ecological					
17. Group students	20*	20	20	20*	20.5*
18. Arrange physical learning environment	17	14	12	14.5*	16
Evaluative					
19. Diagnose learner needs	6	3	3	2	4
20. Monitor progress	14.5*	16	17	9	15
21. Assess achievement	10.5*	15	15.5	10	11

*Indicates tied ranks.

[1]Information collected in pilot test.

Phase 2: Assessing behavior change during student teaching.

Assistance with the second phase of the study was provided particularly by two individuals, Mr. Leroy Sloan who coordinated this phase and Dr. D.A. MacKay of the Centre for Research in Teaching who with his associates devised a sophisticated procedure for recording the in-school observations of student teacher behaviors. In addition, the latter trained the twenty-one graduate student faculty consultants who collected the data during the course of their regular visits to observe student teachers in Edmonton area schools. The research design centered on a plausible means for determining the nature and degree of change over time in the performance of student teachers in a variety of teaching behaviors which had been found in the research to relate to pupil outcomes in the classroom.

Five observation instruments designed to facilitate the collection of high and low inference teaching behaviors were used and following pilot-tests with the instruments the data were collected at the beginning and end of each student teaching round. Since most of the students experienced two practicum rounds, four observations were made, one during the first or second week of the first round and another during the final week of the round. A similar pattern was followed for the second round of student teaching. The teaching behaviors examined in the present study were chosen on the basis of their relationship to one or more of the twenty-one teaching skills identified in the first phase. For one of these skill areas; namely, "Questioning" both low and high inference data were collected. All other data were of the high inference sort, that is, they involve variables like warmth or enthusiasm which require the

observer to use a high degree of interpretation. The low inference variables required the observer simply to record, usually by means of a frequency count, a readily identifiable behavior such as "teacher responds to a pupil's question."

A discussion of the teacher behaviors or strategies, which were drawn from US and Alberta research on teaching and used in the present study--as well as the relationship of each of these strategies to product variables--is found in a report prepared by MacKay (1979).

Findings. The findings for Phase 2 of the study are summarized in Table 2. In general, significant changes or improvements in student-teacher performance occurred for about half of the behaviors (skills) examined. For a third of these significant growth occurred in both rounds of student teaching; for just over a third it occurred mainly in the first round; and for a sixth it occurred mainly in the second. With approximately another seventh of the behaviors observed there was change in the positive direction but this was minimal. It is also noteworthy that for about half the skills researched the changes in student teacher behaviors were insignificant. Apparently only half or so of the "necessary" skills are amenable to development in the type of practicum--mainly eight weeks in length--which the study population experienced. No apparent improvement occurred in the ecological skills, for example, and little in the curricular and evaluative.

Additional analyses revealed that growth in the various skills differed from person to person and was also related to the particular school where the student teaching was being done, to the grade level and, in some instances, to the subject matter taught.

Table 2

Development of Teaching Skills during Student Teaching

Skill and associated teaching behavior	Improved Teacher Behavior		
	Round 1	2	Overall
MANAGERIAL SKILLS			
1. Handle Routines			
a) Teacher used a system of rules with personal and procedural matters	Yes	-	Yes
b) Teacher used a system of rules which allowed pupils to carry out learning with a minimum of direction	-	Yes	Yes
c) Teacher used a standard signal to get students' attention	Yes	-	Yes
2. Control Students			
a) Teacher prevented misbehaviors from continuing	Yes	-	Yes
b) Teacher directed disciplinary action accurately	-	-	-
c) Teacher handled disruptive situations in a low key manner (non-verbal, proximity, etc.)	-	Yes	Yes
d) Teacher did not begin speaking to the group until all students were paying attention	Yes	Yes	Yes
e) Teacher stopped speaking/instructing until all students were paying attention	Yes	Yes	Yes
CURRICULAR SKILLS			
3. Specify Objectives			
a) General lesson planning style (global analysis)	-	-	-
4. Select Content			
a) Teacher ensured assignments were interesting and worthwhile while children worked independently	-	Yes	Yes
5. Organize Material			
a) Teacher encouraged quantity and quality of work in Language Arts	-	-	-
b) Teacher related math games and independent activities to the concepts being taught	-	-	-
c) Teacher increased the amount of written work so that pupils did some writing every day	-	-	-
6. Organize Time and Resources			
a) Teacher's behavior maintained the pace of the lesson	Yes	-	Yes
b) Teacher optimized academic learning time in that pupils were actively involved and productively engaged in learning tasks	-	-	-
METHODOLOGICAL SKILLS			
7. Present Information			
a) Teacher used techniques that provide for the gradual transition from concrete to more abstract activities	Yes	-	Yes
b) Teacher was clear in presentations to the class	Yes	-	Yes
8. Explain (some improvement)	(?)	(?)	(Yes)
9. Question			
a) Teacher used an appropriate mixture of high and low order questions	Yes	Yes	Yes
b) Question type (product, process, choice, self-referenced)	-	-	-
c) Means of pupil selection (slight improvement)	-	-	-
d) Sustaining feedback (slight increase)	-	-	(Yes)
e) Terminal feedback (slight increase)	-	-	(Yes)
10. Summarize (Little evidence of this behavior)	-	-	-
11. Use Alternative Methods (Utilize media)			
a) Teacher used a variety of instructional techniques adapting instruction to meet learning needs	-	-	Yes
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS			
12. Establish rapport with students			
a) Teacher provided evidence of "caring", "accepting", and "valuing" of children	Yes	Yes	Yes
b) Teacher responded accurately to both obvious and less obvious meanings, feelings, and experiences of children	Yes	Yes	Yes
13. Motivate students			
a) Teacher was able to motivate children	Yes	Yes	Yes
14. Accommodate individual student differences (Little change: at elementary level)	-	-	(Yes)
15. Encourage student participation			
a) Teacher response to child-initiated interaction	-	-	-
b) In general, slight positive change	-	-	(Yes)
16. Work with others on staff (Slight positive change)	-	-	(Yes)
ECOLOGICAL SKILLS			
17. Group students (very little change)	-	-	-
18. Arrange physical learning environment (very little change)	-	-	-
EVALUATIVE SKILLS			
19. Diagnose learner needs (Little evidence of student-teacher involvement)	-	-	-
20. Monitor progress			
a) Teacher moved around the room a lot (monitoring seatwork)	-	-	-
b) Teacher used a system of spot-checking assignments	-	-	-
c) Teacher was aware of what was going on in the classroom	Yes	Yes	Yes
21. Assess achievement (Little evidence of student-teacher involvement)	-	-	-
OTHER SKILLS			
22. Overlappingness			
a) Teacher was able to attend to more than one issue at a time	Yes	-	Yes
23. Smoothness			
a) Teacher facilitated the smooth flow of the lesson or a smooth flow from one activity to another	Yes	-	Yes

Although growth in the various skill areas was uneven, sometimes occurring mainly in the early stages of the practicum, sometimes later and often quite uniformly throughout the practicum, an interesting pattern existed for twelve of the behaviors examined. This is pictorially represented in Figure 2 which reveals an increase in competency during the first round of student teaching but a significant drop from the last observation in round one to the first in round two. The final observation reveals a further growth during the second round to a point higher than had been achieved in round one. Apparently, the change of situation, such as a move from junior high to senior high teaching and from one school to another, has an impact on the performance of student teachers. The teaching strategies acquired in a given locale seem to be somewhat situation specific.

Phase 3: Assessing the competence of beginning teachers. The third phase of the study was concerned with assessing how well beginning teachers were doing in each skills area. Both self ratings and supervisor ratings were used with 107 rural, urban and suburban new teachers. Overall, there was high agreement between both sets of ratings with supervisors more often than the novice teachers assigning the higher rating. The self-ratings, shown in Table 3, reveal a level of confidence among beginning teachers such that they felt, on the whole, they were doing at least adequately in each skills area. On the other hand it is worthy of mention that these are averages and for most of the skills areas at least a few respondents--and for some skills a large number--reported doing poorly or very poorly.

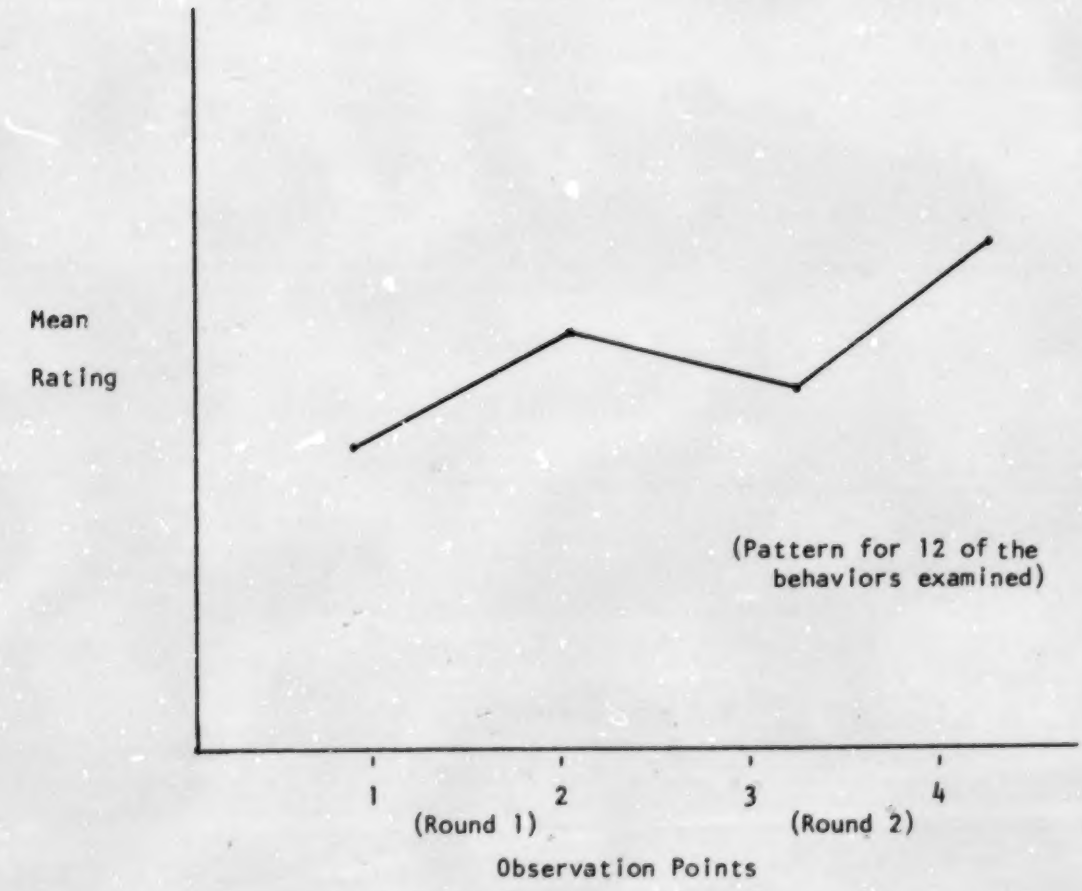

Figure 2

Typical Pattern of Student-Teacher
Behavior Change

Table 3

Beginning Teacher Ratings of Their University Preparation

Skills	Average Self-Rating of Performance[1]	Average Rating of University Preparation[1]	Discrepancy[2]	Percent Rating University Preparation Poor or Very Poor
Managerial				
1. Handle routines	2.24	3.69	-1.45	60
2. Control students	2.38	3.88	-1.50	72
Curricular				
3. Specify objectives	2.69	2.58	.11	14
4. Select content	2.51	3.33	-.82	41
5. Organize material	2.49	3.33	-.84	43
6. Plan instruction	2.31	3.13	-.82	36
Methodological				
7. Present information	2.26	3.01	-.75	32
8. Explain	2.24	3.17	-.93	40
9. Question	2.42	2.92	-.50	26
10. Summarize	2.75	3.12	-.37	34
11. Utilize media	2.97	2.99	-.02	30
Interpersonal				
12. Establish rapport with students	1.81	3.72	-1.91	63
13. Motivate students	2.40	3.34	-.94	46
14. Accommodate individual student differences	2.88	3.67	-.79	59
15. Encourage student participation	2.35	3.46	-1.10	48
16. Work with others on staff	2.04	3.85	-1.81	64
Ecological				
17. Group students	2.76	3.50	-.75	51
18. Arrange physical learning environment	2.73	3.46	-.72	49
Evaluative				
19. Diagnose learner needs	2.90	3.52	-.62	51
20. Monitor progress	2.84	3.51	-.67	44
21. Assess achievement	2.72	3.54	-.82	48

[1]The average ratings shown were computed on the basis of the following scores: 1 = Very well; 2 = Well; 3 = Adequately; 4 = Poorly; 5 = Very poorly.

[2]All differences between means significant except for skills 3 and 11.

Phase 4: Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher education program. The last three columns of Table 3 report findings of the beginning teacher assessment of their preparation as poor or very poor for the majority of skills. For example, over fifty per cent--and for one of the variables seventy per cent--rated as poor or very poor their preparation in (1) handling routines; (2) controlling students; (3) establishing rapport with students; (4) accommodating individual student differences; (5) working with others on staff; (6) grouping students; and (7) diagnosing learner needs. As evident from the Phase 2 findings, at least three of these are amenable to development during the education practicum. Perhaps several of the others can be developed in formal courses or in a practicum experience suitably planned and organized to achieve improved teaching competence in these areas.

Conclusion

This paper began with the question "Research, Service, Leadership: But What Do I Do with the Class?" A rationale was presented for investigating the context of educational organizations--such as schools, colleges, or Faculties of Education--and building in a program renewal capacity as an essential operational component of every such organization. The findings of several program evaluation studies conducted at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education were reviewed. These studies were designed to collect internal and external indicators of the strengths and weaknesses of our program--data of the sort used in program renewal models. Leadership, research and service? Yes, the Faculty is providing it. But what about the beginning teacher? Our interviews with 107 of them revealed a great number of problems they face in their first year. Some have said, "This

first year is hell!" Others claim to be "shell shocked" by Christmas. Still others contend, "I'm having problems and I don't know who to turn to. My principal seems remote and I'm reluctant to go to him. No one at the university knows me--or cares. The A.T.A. doesn't provide a service to help people in the classroom. Where can I go for help? . . . My friend at X school is lucky. He has a mother who teaches. He consults with her. But what about the rest of us? I'm having discipline problems in my class. What do I do with the kids?" Fellow Kappans and guests, I don't have a ready-made solution to this problem. I'm sure there is one. I guess it's a challenge to all of us.